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ABSTRACT

Although research has established a linkage between maltreatment and running away, there have been few in-depth investigations of this phenomenon. This study was conducted to: (1) describe the nature of maltreatment among runaway and homeless youth; (2) provide a profile of their family and demographic characteristics; (3) examine how maltreated runaway and homeless youth differ from the runaway and homeless youth population at large; and (4) present behavioral indicators of adolescent maltreatment to assist with the uncovering of maltreatment among troubled youth. Data were derived from the Statewide Teamwork for Abused Runaways (STAR) project, a federal research and demonstration project designed to strengthen services to runaway and homeless youth and their families. Subjects included 223 abused and neglected youth who sought services from nine runaway and homeless youth programs in New York. A questionnaire on the nature of maltreatment, youth and family characteristics, and the runaway program's experience with child protective services, and the Youth Information Form were completed by project staff when services were terminated. Youth were not directly interviewed with the instruments. The results revealed that, compared to runaways and homeless youth in general, the maltreated sample had a higher percentage of females, and a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic program users. Maltreatment was the primary reason most of the maltreated subjects sought help from the project. The results of the study affirm the importance of identifying maltreatment among runaway and homeless youth. (Thirty-five references are provided.) (NB)

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RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME:
A RESPONSE TO ADOLESCENT MALTREATMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Each year, an estimated 1 to 1.5 million youth between the age of 10-17 run away from home (USDHHS, 1983). The vast majority of these youth are at high risk for self-destructive behaviors, substance abuse, physical and mental health problems. In the worst scenario, being homeless or on the street today puts youth at risk for exploitation: prostitution, pornography, crime, and even murder. Runaway and homeless youth are particularly at risk for AIDS, given their drug and sexual activity. Contrary to the perception of runaways as adolescent adventurers, most are victims of dysfunctional families and failed child welfare placements. Increasingly, evidence shows that youth are on the streets because they have been physically abused, sexually abused, or "pushed out" of their homes by their parents. Given that many runaway and homeless youth are at risk for exploitation and victimization, it is imperative that we examine and understand the role maltreatment plays in this process.

The problems associated with runaway and homeless youth are not unique to contemporary society. But unlike the youth who ran away from home during the 19th and early 20 century, who had a relatively easy time integrating into the community and securing work roles, today's youth face greater difficulties finding a place for themselves in the economic structure. The prolonged period of adolescence as a moratorium from adult responsibilities, such as work, has destroyed many of the legitimate economic roles into which young people could once fit (Garbarino et al., 1986). In order to survive, increasing numbers of street youth see no alternative but illegitimate economic activites, e.g., prostitution, robbery, the drug trade.

The problem of runaway and homeless youth took on a new significance during the 1960's and 1970's when the number of youth who left home rose dramatically (Janus et al., 1987). A variety of theories emerged in the literature regarding how this phenomenon should be viewed: as a delinquent (irresponsible, impulsive) act, as a normal part of adolescent development, or as indicative of familial and societal pathology (Brennan et al., 1979; Nye, 1981). Although no consensus was reached, it became clear to those dealing with this population that a significant number of youth were at risk, both on the streets and in their homes.

While in the past, runaways tended to leave home because of communication problems and conflicts with parents, today a high percentage of youth run because of stressful home environments which are ridden with marital, economic, and alcohol related problems (Cohen, 1987; Janus et al., 1987).

Research provides evidence to support the link between maltreatment and running away and homelessness (Garbarino et al., 1986; Gutierres and Reich, 1981. Farber et al., 1984; Young et al., 1983). Several studies have shown that in comparison to the general population, a much higher rate of childhood sexual abuse has been found among runaways (Burgess et. al., 1986; Adams-Tucker, 1982; Fisher and Berdie, 1978). Farber and his colleagues (1984) found that 75% of the 199 runaway youth in their sample had been subjected to severe maltreatment in the year prior to running and concluded that violence in the home significantly contributed to the youth's

runaway behavior. A recent national survey conducted by the National Network of Runaway and Homeless Youth (1988) reported that 61% of all runaways have been maltreated. Studies by Lourie et al., (1979), Shaffer and Caton (1984), and Nilson (1981) all indicate a significant incidence of maltreatment in samples of runaways.

These studies, however, probably underestimate the true incidence of maltreatment given that abuse and neglect is frequently not recognized and reported among adolescents in general (Garbarino et. al., 1986; Fisher and Berdie, 1978). The maltreatment of young children has been of much greater concern to policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and the media, than the maltreatment of adolescents, even though research clearly refutes the myth that young children are the main victims of abuse and neglect. For example, the first national incidence study of child abuse and neglect (USDHHS, 1981) reported that adolescents accounted for 47% of the known maltreatment cases, 42% of which were substantiated upon investigation.

A number of factors contribute to the under-reporting of adolescent maltreatment. Young children are peceived to be more physically vulnerable to maltreatment and in greater need of help and protection, whereas adolescents, by virtue of their size, intellect and potential mobility can take care of themselves. Further, because of their sometime erratic and difficult behavior, adolescents may be perceived to be provocative and therefore deserving of the maltreatment they receive. But there are risks unique to this age group, such as drug abuse, delinquency, pregnancy, suicide, and it is precisely these sorts of behavior that may mask maltreatment, thereby making identification more difficult. Maltreated youth are frequently brought to the attention of school authorities, mental health agencies, police, or probation officers because of their acting out behavior while the maltreatment remains hidden and appropriate services are not provided (Fisher et al., 1980; Berdie and Wexler, 1980). The way in which the youth enters the services system and the label given to an adolescent's behavior (i.e., an abused youth or a delinquent youth) will ultimately determine how a youth is treated and which services she receives (Garbarino et al., 1986; Farber and Joseph, 1985). Thus, the early identification and assessment of maltreatment among adolescents is particularly critical to prevent re-victimization and for intervention to be effective.

Although a number of researchers have established a linkage between maltreatment and running away there have been few in-depth investigations of this phenomenon. We lack descriptive data on the nature of maltreatment among this population. Such information could be used not only to develop a strong research base on which to generate hypotheses and build theories, but also to assist policy and program planners, and clinicians to better serve maltreated as well as runaway and homeless youth in general.

Thus, the goals of this study are: 1) to describe the nature of maltreatment among runaway and homeless youth; 2) to provide a profile of their family and demographic characterstics; 3) to examine how **maltreated** runaway and homeless youth differ from the runaway and homeless youth population at large; 4) to present behavioral indicators of adolescent maltreatment to assist with the uncovering of

maltreatment among troubled youth.

METHODS

Design and Sample

The data for this research are derived from the STAR project (Statewide Teamwork for Abused Runaways), a federal research and demonstration project designed to strengthen services to runaway and homeless youth and their families.[1] The subjects in this study include 223 abused and neglected youth who sought services from nine runaway and homeless youth (R&HY) programs in New York State during 1986-1987. These were youth whom program staff identified as having had a history of maltreatment, based primarily on the youth's self-disclosure. Staff completed the questionnaires when services were terminated based on knowledge gained during their normal course of interaction with the youth, not by directly interviewing the youth with the instrument.

Measures

Two instruments were used to collect the data. First, a semi-structured questionnaire developed by the STAR project, gathered information on the nature of maltreatment (e.g. types of abuse/neglect, pattern, age of onset, alleged perpetrators, etc.), youth and family characteristics, and the runaway program's contact and experience with child protective services. The second instrument, the Youth Information Form (YIF), is used by the federal government to gather information and monitor the R&HY programs which they fund. Demographic data are recorded on this form, as well as specific information about the runaway episode and the services provided by the program. All the information collected in this study was strictly confidential, as the names of the clients were removed prior to our receipt of the data.

Using the YIF enabled us to compare the STAR sample of maltreated runaway and homeless youth with the runaway and homeless youth population at large. We gained access to national and New York State YIF data from the Administration for Children Youth and Families which were gathered during the same time frame as our study.[2] In several of the analyses below, we compare the STAR sample with federal data focusing on the state of New York and data representing all federally funded R&HY programs throughout the United States. Table 1 lists the three data sets which we will present, the number of individual cases (i.e., the number of youth), and the number of programs from which the figures were drawn.

TABLE 1
DATA SETS USED FOR ANALYSES

Name	Number of Cases	Number of R&HY Programs
STAR	223	9
NYS	2026	14
USA	39,817	400

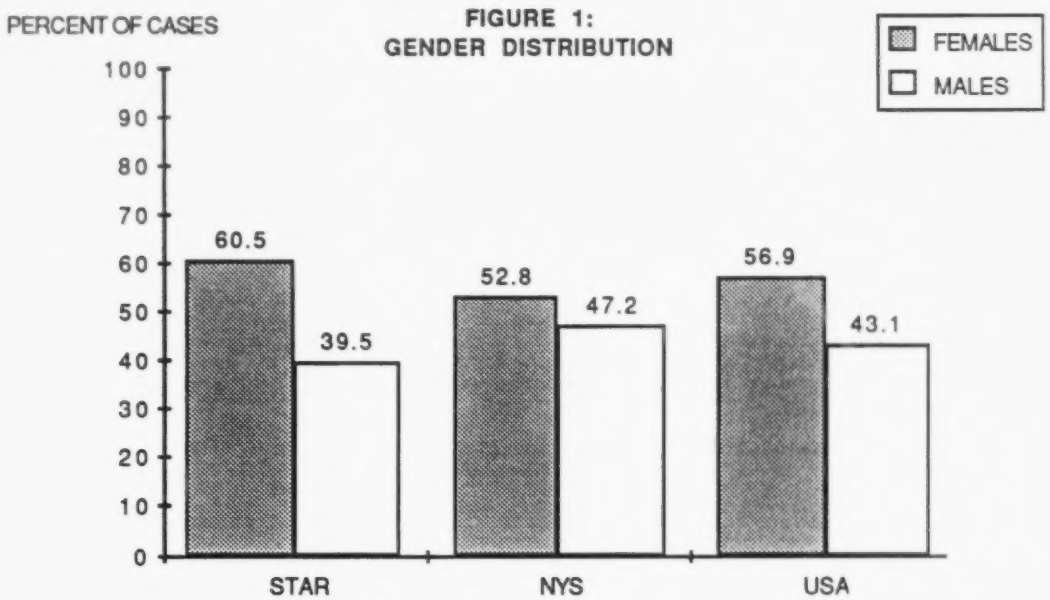
RESULTS

Characersitics of the Youth

Age and Gender

Nearly three-fourths of the youth in our sample were between 15-17 years of age (the mean age was 15.6) when they sought services from the R&HY program. This finding is consistent with several previous studies of this population (Farber et al., 1984; Shaffer and Caton, 1984; USDHHS, 1982; DHEW, 1980; Opinion Research Coporation, 1976), and with both statewide and national YIF reporting data for 1987.

Figure 1 presents the STAR data in contrast to statewide and national data and shows that there are more girls than boys across all three data sets. This suggests, perhaps, that girls are more likely to seek help, while boys are more likely to act out in the community and get involved in the juvenile justice system. The gender difference is greatest, however, for the maltreatment sample, where 61% of the sample is female. Other research has also shown a a higher percentage of females in official reports of child maltreatment involving adolescents (Powers and Eckenrode, 1988; Farber and Joseph, 1985; Libbey and Bybee,1979; Lourie, 1977). The gender difference observed in the STAR sample is not a reflection of differences in the overall population given that 1980 NYS census data show that boys slightly outnumber girls in the 12-18 age group.



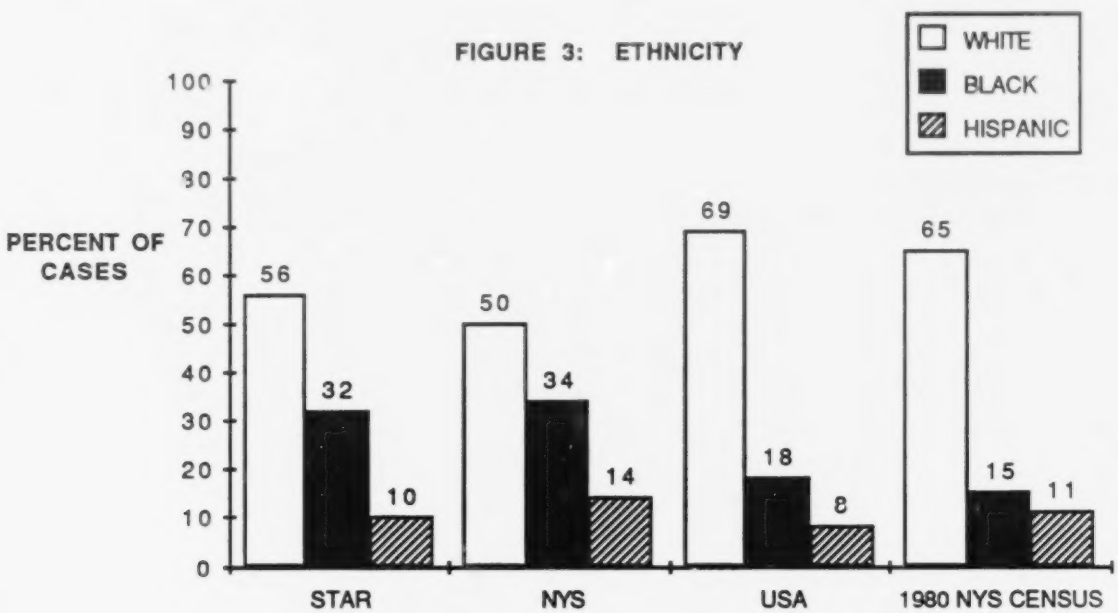
We examined the relationship between age and gender and found that males and females follow a very similar pattern, except at age 15. Figure 2 shows that the

majority of girls seek services between the age 15-17, while boys it is 16-17. This observed trend is also visible in the statewide and national federal data which reports a higher percentage of younger girls seeking services than younger boys.

FIGURE 2:
GENDER BY AGE OF YOUTH

The ethnicity of the youth in these three samples is compared to 1980 New York State census data in Figure 3.[3] In comparison to the census data for children between the age 12-18, the STAR and NYS sample show an under-representation of white youth, and an over-representation of black and Hispanic youth. This difference is greatest for black youth where the proportion is twice that of the state population.

FIGURE 3: ETHNICITY



Although other researchers have found an over-representation of black children in offical maltreatment reports (AHA, 1986; Hampton and Newberger, 1985), this finding must be interpreted with caution since it may reflect the particular location of the programs in the present study. Runaway programs and shelters tend to be in urban areas where accessability and needs are greatest, and which have a high concentration of minorities. Consequently, we will see a higher percentage of minority youth in the sample. If we had only drawn our sample in New York City, we would have expected a much higher percentage of minorities, for example Shaffer and Caton (1984) found that 96% of the runaway and homeless youth population in New York City was black and Hispanic.

Although these data were collected at R&HY programs, it is important to point out that not all the youth had run away or were homeless. R&HY programs provide a variety of youth services and many young people seek help from programs for non-runaway reasons. The next figure compares the runaway status (i.e., classification given to the youth at intake) of the STAR and national samples. In contrast to the national sample, STAR has a higher percentage of runaway and homeless youth, 66% as opposed to 48%. We strongly suspect that the greater number of runaway and homeless youth observed in the STAR sample reflects the maltreatment, that young people who are abused and/or neglected are more apt to run or be homeless.

FIGURE 4: YOUTH STATUS AT INTAKE

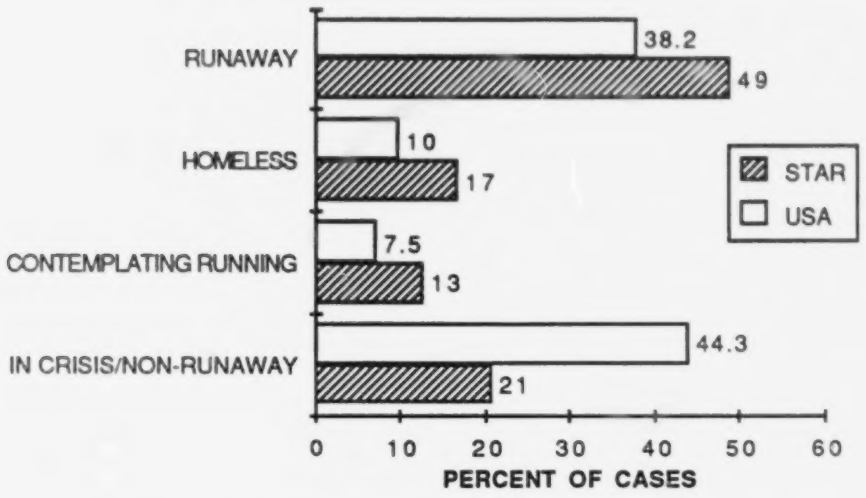


Table 2 points out that across all three data sets, girls are more likely to run away while boys are more likely to be homeless. This confirms the findings of Young et al., (1983) who suggest that girls run in response to restrictive environments, whereas boys more often deal with detached and rejecting families, which are more apt to create the "pushed out" or "throwaway" youth.

TABLE 2
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH STATUS

	MALES		FEMALES	
	Runaway	Homeless	Runaway	Homeless
STAR	37.1	58.3	62.9	41.7
NYS	29.8	59.8	70.2	40.2
USA	34.7	55.3	65.3	44.7

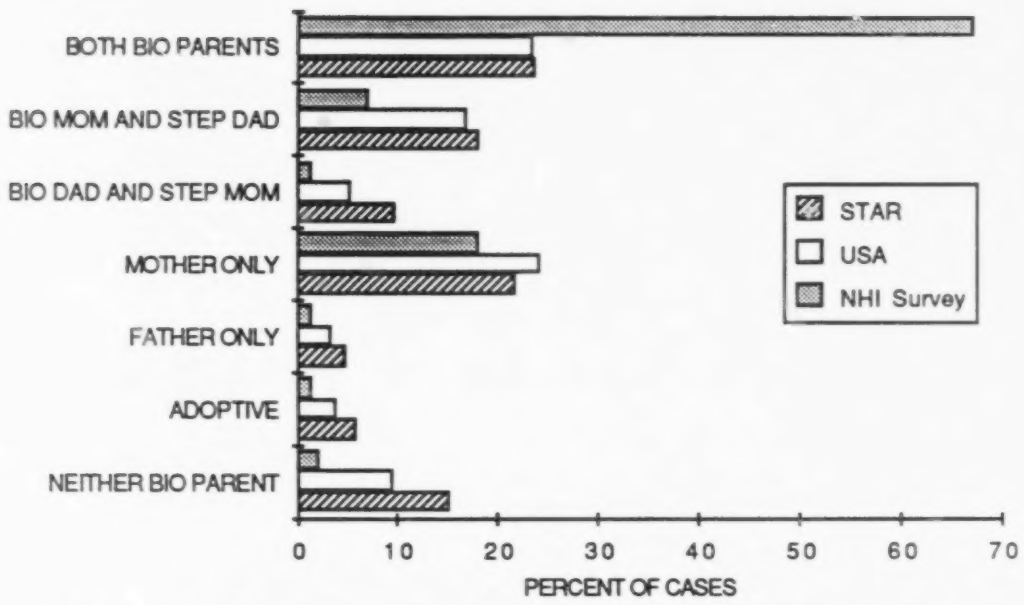
Of the youth who were classified as runaway or homeless in the STAR sample, 35% had no prior runaway episodes; of the youth who were contemplating running or in crisis, 73% had no prior history of running away. About 25% of the sample, however, had run at least three times before. Other studies have shown that chronic runaways suffer from greater psychological problems and long term adjustment problems (Olson et al., 1980) and are more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system as offenders (Burgess et al., 1986; Garbarino et al., 1986) which makes intervention at the initial runaway episode particularly critical. One-fourth of the youth in the sample had dropped out of school, which has been identified as another negative outcome of running away (Young et al., 1983).

The Families

Over three fourths of the STAR sample had run away from the home of their parents or legal guardians, and this is consistent with the state and national data. In terms of the identified father and mother figures in the youth's primary household, 67% lived with their biological mothers, while 41% lived with their biological fathers. 25% of the sample had no father figure, while less than 10% had no mother figure. These findings are consistent with the state and national YIF data.

Figure 6 illustrates the actual family structure of the youth's primary household and compares the STAR sample with national YIF data. Also included in the figure are data from the 1981 Child Health Supplement to the National Health Interview Survey, a representative national sample of over 15,000 American children (Bianchi and Seltzer, 1986). Most striking is the fact that less than 25% of the runaway and homeless youth in the STAR and USA samples came from "intact families" i.e., lived with both biological parents, while the National Health Interview Survey reports that 68% of children nationwide live with both biological parents. The STAR data also indicate that one-third of the sample were born into single parent households. This finding is consistent with other studies which have shown that a high percentage of runaways come from divorced or broken families (Kufeldt and Nimmo, 1987; Burgess et al., 1986; Shaffer and Caton, 1984; Edelbrock, 1980). The figure also points out that, much to our expectation, that a higher percentage of runaway and homeless youth live with neither biological parent (15.4%) in contrast to children nationwide (2.3%).

FIGURE 5: FAMILY STRUCTURE



Only 20.6% of the sample came from families known to be on public assistance. Of the youth who had fathers, 16% were unemployed; of the youth who had mothers, 28% were unemployed. These data show that many of these youth came from professional and middle class families, which supports the speculation that runaways come from the entire spectrum of American families (Nye, 1980).

The Nature of the Maltreatment

Types of abuse and neglect

According to the R&HY staff, the most common form of maltreatment among the youth in the STAR sample was physical abuse, occurring in 60% of the cases. This typically involved long and severe beatings with objects (e.g. telephones, extension chords, chains, wood, belt buckles, broom sticks), being kicked, slapped, punched, and generally beaten up. Although other researchers have found that runaways come from highly violent families (Farber et al., 1984; Burgess et al., 1986), we found this statistic particularly striking because in New York State, less than 10% of all reported cases of maltreatment involve physical abuse (NYSDSS, 1987). It is important to recognize, however, that physical abuse here was literally defined by shelter staff and may not coincide with some state legal definitions which may be more narrow and restrictive. The fact that staff believed that these youth had been physically abused is nevertheless a significant fact: violence in the homes of these youth may be an important contributing factor to their decision to run away and seek help.

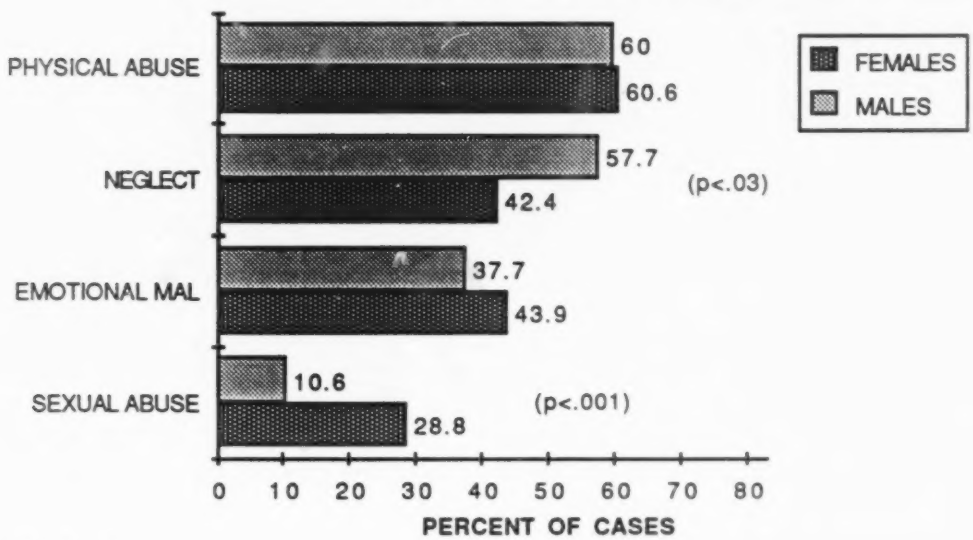
Neglect was observed in almost half of the cases (48.2%), and typically involved inadequate guardianship, abandonment, lack of supervision, or not providing adequate food, clothing, and medical care. 41% of the youth in this sample were

identified by staff as being emotionally maltreated. This entailed extreme verbal abuse, name calling, derogatory remarks, constant yelling , blaming, scapegoating, and rejection. Service providers who work with abused youth claim that emotional maltreatment is one of the most pervasive forms of maltreatment, but that it is rarely reported to CPS because it is so difficult to define and prove (Berdie and Wexler, 1980).

Nearly 25% of the sample were reported to have been sexually abused, which again is much higher than the officially reported incidence of sexual abuse in New York State which is approximately 8% of all cases (Eckenrode et al., 1988). This finding, however, is consistent with other research which has shown a higher incidence of sexual abuse among runaway and homeless youth than in the population at large (Burgess et al., 1986). In the STAR sample, we observed that the youth who were contemplating running, or who were "in crisis", but came to the program for a non-runaway reason, were significantly more likely to have experienced sexual abuse than youth labeled runaway/homeless (χ^2 =7.5 df=1, p<.01).

Although we found no significant gender differences for physical abuse, or emotional maltreatment, we did find that sexual abuse was significantly more likely to involve females (χ^2 =10.09; df=1; p<.001), which is consistent with other research (AHA, 1986; Finkelhor, 1980). We also found, however, that neglect was significantly more likely to involve males (χ^2 =4.79; df=1; p<.03). This finding reflects the fact that boys are more likely to be pushouts (χ^2=7.99, df=1, p<.01), and that this is a consequence of neglect.

FIGURE 6: TYPE OF MALTREATMENT BY GENDER

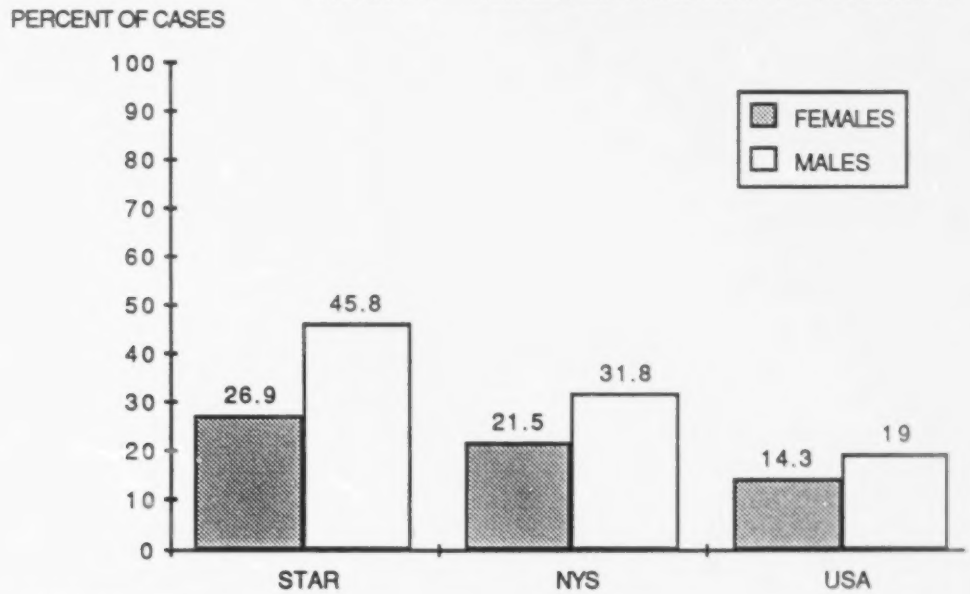


The Pushout

Pushouts, sometimes called throwaways, are young people who do not willingly

choose to leave home but are forced to leave home by their parents with the intention that they not return. 35% of the STAR sample were pushouts, in contrast to 16% of the overall USA population of runaways, and 26% for the state of New York. The next figure shows that across all three data sets, boys are more likely to be pushouts than girls.

FIGURE 7: GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF PUSHOUTS



Details of the Maltreatment

The estimated mean age of onset as reported by staff for each type of maltreatment ranged between 11-13 years. Given that the mean age at intake of the youth in this sample is 15.6, it appears that many of these youth had been maltreated for a substantial period of time.

We also examined the pattern of maltreatment, whether it was a single incident, a few incidents which occurred over time, or a chronic problem. As expected, emotional maltreatment had the most chronic pattern (82% of cases), but a significant proportion of the other forms of maltreatment were also chronic: in 55% of the neglect, 48% of the sexual abuse, and 42% of physical abuse.

In over 80% of the cases, for both emotional maltreatment and neglect, the maltreatment was currently happening at the time the youth sought services from the program. For physical abuse, 66% was reported to be currently happening in contrast to 37% of the sexual abuse. The fact that few youth disclosed that sexual abuse was a current problem may have to do with the stigma attached to this form of maltreatment, which is especially difficult for adolescents who are dealing with their new found sexuality. Adolescents may tend to deny or minimize sexual abuse in order to distance themselves from it emotionally. As such, it is probably easier to say that sexual abuse happened in the past, rather than admit that it is still happening.

In 88.3% of the cases, maltreatment was a reason, if not the primary reason, a youth ran away from home. This is not surprising considering that our sample consists only of maltreated runaways, however, it is nevertheless significant for our project. The connection between abuse and running away for these youth is clear. Farber and his associates (1984) also found that violence towards adolescents is a significant factor in the adolescent's decision to run.

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF MALTREATMENT

While acknowledging that there are likely to be wide individual differences in behavioral manifestations of maltreatment in any population of runaway and homeless youth, we asked staff to indicate what behaviors they attributed to the maltreatment of youth in the STAR project. These perceptions are important to document because they reveal the observations and interpretations of workers who are called upon to advise and assist these youth as well as to interact with child protection personnel involved with these cases. Tables 3 lists the behavioral indicators which R&HY staff observed among the youth in the STAR sample. The most frequently cited indicators, occuring in over half the cases, included poor self esteem, in 57% of the cases, and depression in 56% of the cases. Adamance about not returning home, and academic dysfunction were frequent indicators, in 38% and 31% respectively.

Several significant sex differences were observed among this sample with regard to behavioral indicators: girls were more likely to be adamant about not returning home ($\chi^2 = 6.15$; df=1; p<.01), have attempted suicide or engaged in suicidal ideation ($\chi^2 = 3.75$; df=1; p<.05), and have had abusive romantic partners ($\chi^2 = 7.52$; df=1; p<.01). Boys, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to have had problems with substance abuse ($\chi^2 =4.75$; df=1; p<.03), hygiene ($\chi^2 =7.20$; df=1; p<.01), engaged in petty stealing ($\chi^2 =11.74$; df=1; p<.001) and other forms of criminal behavior ($\chi^2 =$ 8.76; df=1; p<.01). Shaffer and Caton's (1984) study of runaway and homeless youth in New York City also found that girls were more likely to have had a history of suicidal behavior, and that boys were more likely to have shown anti-social behavior and have encounted problems with the law.

Preliminary analyses of these data suggest that indicators varied as a function of the type of maltreatment. Since most youth experienced multiple forms of maltreatment, we were unable to specify precise linkages between types of maltreatment and behavioral indicators. However, we did find that cases which allegedly involved sexual abuse had the highest incidence of depression, among 70.2% of cases. Suicidal behavior was observed among 38.3% of youth who had been sexually abused, as opposed to 14% among the youth who had not been sexually abused. Other researchers have found sexually abused runaways more likely to report suicidal feelings than non-abused runaways (McCormack, Janus and Burgess, 1986). Youth who had been allegedly sexually abused appeared to exhibit more severe indicators, than youth who experienced other forms of maltreatment, such as eating disorders, self mutilation, sleeping problems, health problems, substance abuse, and

sexual acting out. All of these behavioral indicators point to a high degree of psychological pathology and dysfunction. Unfortunately, these youth rarely seek or cooperate with traditional mental health services, even when they are offered.

TABLE 4
BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF MALTREATMENT

INDICATOR	MALES (N= 85)		FEMALES (N= 131)		
	N	%	N	%	p
poor self esteem	50	58.8	73	56.2	
depression	45	52.9	77	58.8	
adamance about not going home	**24**	**28.2**	**59**	**45.0**	p<.01
school/academic dysfunction	28	32.9	40	30.5	
frequent control issues	17	20.0	36	27.5	
overall runaway pattern	17	20.0	36	27.5	
truancy	19	22.4	29	22.1	
change in affect re certain adult	18	21.2	29	22.1	
suicide attempt/ideation	**10**	**11.8**	**29**	**22.1**	p<.05
drug/alcohol abuse	**20**	**23.5**	**16**	**12.2**	p<.03
preoccupation	15	17.7	21	16.0	
very secretive	10	11.8	22	16.8	
assaultive/aggressive behavior	14	16.5	16	12.2	
problems with hygiene	**17**	**20.0**	**10**	**7.6**	p<.01
abnormal sleep patterns	9	10.6	17	13.0	
sudden or chronic withdrawal	10	11.8	12	9.2	
health complaints	6	7.1	16	12.2	
gravitates toward a/n youth	8	9.4	13	9.9	
petty stealing	**15**	**17.7**	**5**	**3.8**	p<.001
excessive sexual acting out	4	4.7	12	9.2	
sudden change in behavior	3	3.5	10	7.6	
self mutilation	4	4.7	8	6.1	
abusive romantic partners	**0**		**11**	**8.4**	p<.01
extreme modesty	4	4.7	7	5.3	
criminal behavior	**9**	**10.6**	**2**	**1.5**	p<.01
eating disorders	4	4.7	7	5.3	

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The results of this research affirm the importance of identifying maltreatment among runaway and homeless youth. For many of the youth in this sample, their abuse and neglect was severe and chronic. Malreatment was the primary reason why the majority of these youth sought help from the R&HY program. Over one-third of the sample had been pushed out of their homes, "thrown away" by their parents. We find this to be an alarming and dangerous statistic, considering the degree to which young people jeopordize their lives when they are on the street. Sixty percent of the sample were physically abused, or had been punished in so violent a manner that program staff believed this to be maltreatment. Running away from home appears to be one route which many youth take in order to escape violence in their families.

The runaway and homeless youth in the maltreated sample (STAR) differed from the federal reporting data in several ways. Although no age differences were observed, the maltreated sample had a higher percentage of females. We question whether this reflects the fact that adolescent females are more likely to be maltreated than adolescent males. Rather, we suspect that staff, and people in general, are less likely to identify maltreatment among boys, but that it is as prevalent. Boys are much less likely to disclose maltreatment, out of the fear of appearing unmanly, vulnerable, or weak. An attitudinal bias in who is at risk for maltreatment exists, whereas girls are perceived to be in greater danger and need of protection, consequently staff may be more likely to suspect abuse and neglect. From our conversations with workers in the field, we have heard that boys are less likely to be believed by child protective services workers.

We also observed a higher percentage of black and Hispanic program users, but we do not know whether this reflects a disproprotionate amount of running away among minority youth, or whether when black and Hispanic adolescents run away they are more likely to go to a program/shelter, perhaps because they cannot call on other, more personal resources. Future research should shed light on this issue and examine whether this is indeed the case.

We recognize that these data are limited insofar as it is difficult to determine the extent to which the observed differences are due to the fact that the STAR sample is maltreated, as opposed to other factors, such as whether the sample is a represenative one. These results, however, clearly show that the household picture of runaway and homeless youth is quite different from the national experience for all children. Less than 25% in all three samples of the runaway and homeless youth population lived with both biological parents, in contrast to 68% of children nationwide. For many runaway and homeless youth, especially those who have been maltreated, the goal of returning to their families may not be feasible or desireable. There is a great need for alternative services, for example, independent living programs, to assist youth in their transition to adulthood, outside of the family context. Regardless of whether youth return home, or live independently, there is also a great need for treatment services designed to address the psychological scars of the maltreatment.

It is critically important to identify maltreatment when its occurs, not only for effective treatment and intervention, but also to prevent re-victimization by the system, i.e., focusing on the criminal/delinquent behavior while ignoring the maltreatment history. Service providers must recognize that acting out behavior can be a mask for maltreatment, and look more closely at what led these youth to flee or behave in a provocative manner. This paper outlines a number of behavioral indicators which may be manifestations of abuse and neglect. The training of youth workers with regard to the identification, reporting, and treatment of adolescent abuse and neglect should be a top priority for programs and policy makers.

It is important to note that our sample consisted of maltreated runaway and homeless youth who **did** seek services. There are an undetermined number of maltreated youth on the streets who never seek services and who are at even greater

risk than those involved with R&HY programs. The costs of running away and homelessness to youth, family and society are substantial. We hope that this study has shed some light on this population, and the particular issues and problems which they confront. How best to assist the youth who can't go home again, is a challenge which researchers and practitoners must confront.

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[3] The ethnic category "other" was excluded from these analyses give then small number of cases which it contained.